

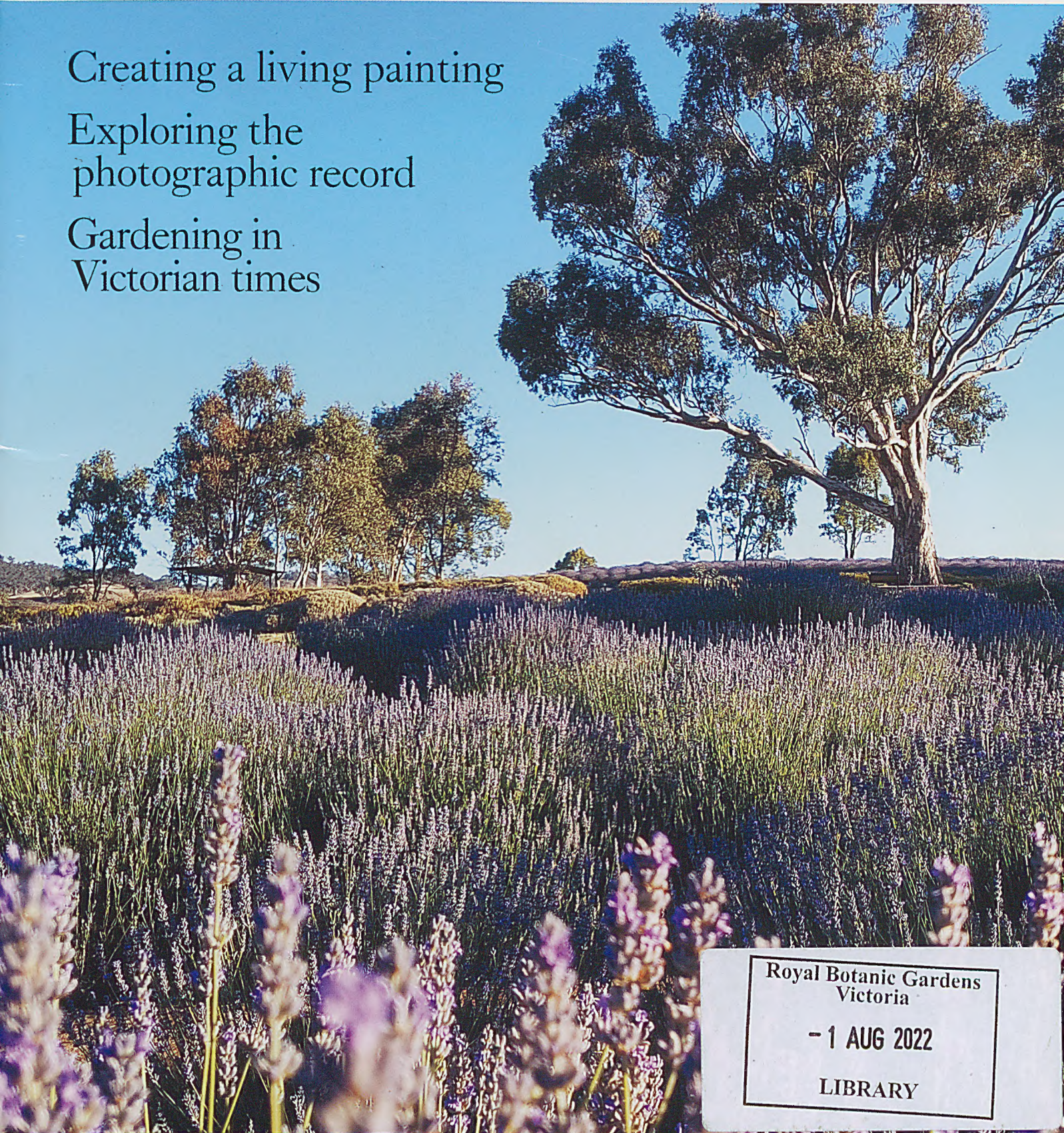
Australian Garden HISTORY

vol. 34, no. 1, July 2022

Creating a living painting

Exploring the
photographic record

Gardening in
Victorian times



Royal Botanic Gardens
Victoria

- 1 AUG 2022

LIBRARY

Editorial

Francesca Beddie



Thirty years ago the High Court overturned the concept of *terra nullius*. The man who campaigned so hard for that decision, Eddie Mabo, was, among many things, a gardener. While working at James Cook University in Townsville, planting trees – and his favourite, hibiscus, which reminded him of home – he learned from historians Noel Loos and Henry Reynolds that, under Australian law, his land on Mer Island in the Torres Strait belonged not to him but to the Crown. Mabo's daughter, Gail, commenting on the 30th anniversary of her father's campaign to change that, said: 'One door has opened and now it's time for the next door to be opened – we can do that as a collaborative [effort] to move things forward'.

Our shared past and the layers of cultural landscapes that make up modern Australia were swirling in my head as I tried to decide on the cover image for this issue. The photograph of lavender – a herb with a long history, as Dot Evans explains – merging into eucalypts evoked the possibility of collaboration with Traditional Custodians.

In that cross-cultural vein, horticulturist Catherine Shields has taken inspiration from the natural environment of the Tasmanian midlands, as well as a painting by English-born John Glover, to reimagine his English garden at *Patterdale*.

Her creation is encouragement for others wanting to preserve the spirit of historic gardens in the face of new environmental challenges.

Stuart Read and Claire Baddeley take us back to 19th-century Sydney, with very different glimpses of the Victorian enthusiasm for plants: in the Garden Palace built for the 1879 international exhibition and in the plant nurseries that flourished in St George. That enthusiasm was also strong in New Zealand, as is evident in Clare Gleeson's article about Quaker Mason's magnificent (now lost) garden in Lower Hutt.

In 1888, Kodak cameras went on the market, creating – from an historian's point of view – a wonderful archival resource. How useful photographs, and other visual records, can be is demonstrated in this issue. Bill Oates is doing a huge amount of work to create an electronic resource of images about Armidale's heritage, including the garden at *Boooloominbah*. Bud Townsing has spearheaded an exhibition displaying gardens in the Southern Highlands then and now. His article appears in the advocacy section, because it shows one way that AGHS members are keeping the importance of preserving historic gardens and landscapes in the public eye.

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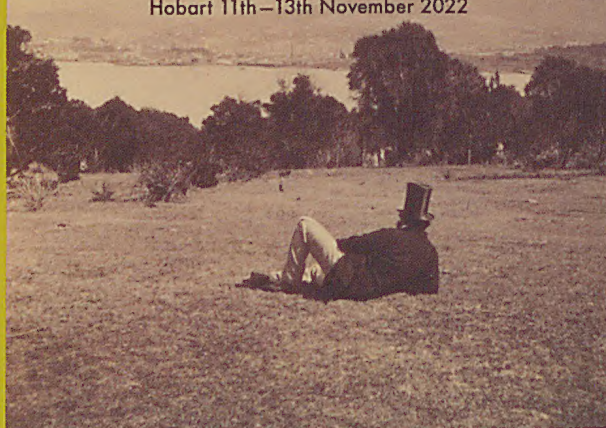
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LANDSCAPE ON THE EDGE:

Challenge and Opportunity

Australian Garden History Society Conference
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Cover photo *Lyndoch Lavender Farm* in South Australia, photo Mat Allanson

Australian Garden HISTORY

quarterly journal of the Australian Garden History Society

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vol. 34, no. 1, July 2022

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Patterdale, an artist's garden revived: a portion of the colour plan used for planting, showing the grid used to set out the matrix planting. See pages 12–17

Image Catherine Shields



Stuart Read

Crystal Palaces

Exhibitions and their legacies

Australia's first international exhibition was held in 1879 in the custom-built Garden Palace, image Charles Bayliss, 1880, State Library of NSW

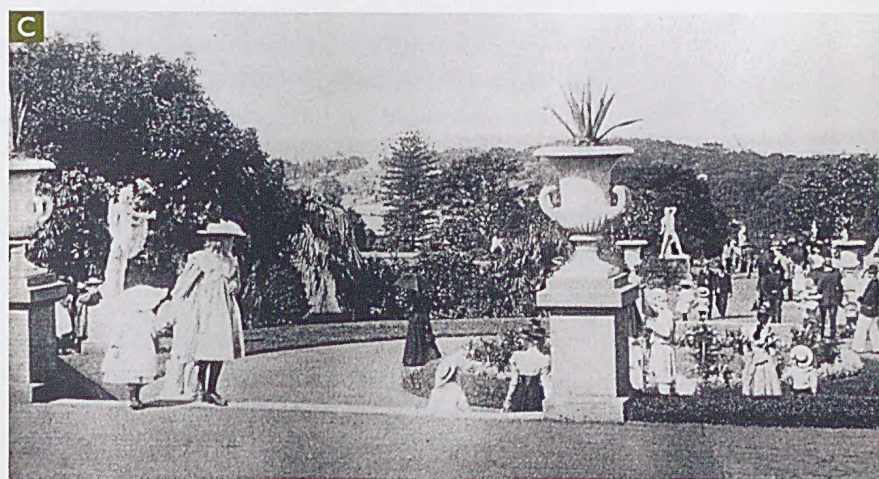
People love showing off. Dressing up. Going out. Gazing at each other, at things. We've always done so. Italians call it *passagiata* and Latin cultures rather relish it. Making an exhibition of yourself is one thing: going to one, with others, quite another. We've long done both.

Doubtless you know of the 1851 Crystal Palace that caught London's, and the western world's, imagination: prefabricated grandiose architecture in steel and glass, creating huge, vaulted spaces in which the goods of empire were displayed, for edification. It made a splash and kicked off a wave of exhibitions around the British Empire and the world – London, Paris, Dublin, Vienna, Philadelphia, Chicago – a competitive field, with ever grander arrays. Hosting the world fair was

proof both to itself and the world that a city and a country had made it, was a player on a grander stage than just the local. It was up-to-date, progressive, forward- and outward-looking, attractive.

Not just buildings but exhibition grounds grabbed attention and had influence. Joseph Paxton was the genius behind the Crystal Palace. He had been head gardener at *Chatsworth* in Derbyshire, where he had coaxed flowers from giant Amazonian water lilies kept under glass. He brought that experience to his concept not only for the Palace building but also the beautifully landscaped grounds for visitors to stroll in and bedding displays that put smart horticulture on show.

Horticultural press (magazines such as *The Gardener's Chronicle* and newspapers like *The Illustrated London News*) reported



exhibition excitement and novelties at length, well extending the reach and influence of ideas beyond a temporary show and visitors to far-off parks and gardens. Earlier expos in Paris (1855, 1867, 1878) had Jean Charles Adolphe Alphand and Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps, whose sophisticated landscaping impressed sniffy foreign writers, including even author of *The Wild Garden*, the cantankerous William Robinson. They also impressed Sydney Botanic Gardens Director, Charles Moore, and his brother David, manager of the Dublin Botanic Garden. Further, Moore's right-hand-man, James Jones, overseer of the Sydney Domains in 1884, had worked under Alphand in Paris. (Several of Jones's French horticulture books, plus a copy of Robinson's 1869 *Parks, Gardens and Promenades of Paris*, are shelved in Sydney Botanic Gardens' Daniel Solander Library collection today.)

Australia gets in on the act

Australia had agricultural and horticultural societies in 1824 in Parramatta, 1829 Perth, 1838 Launceston and 1839 South Australia. From inception some had displays, 'shows'. These were local; later, regional. After striking gold, we became ambitious and had national displays from 1854. Melbourne's in 1866 was our first inter-colonial event; Sydney's, in Prince Alfred Park in 1870, was notable for ready railway access and our first exhibition landscape; Brisbane had its turn in 1876; and Adelaide in 1887. These shows tended to focus on economic exports — crops, coal, wood, steel, machinery, wine, fibre, textiles — and fine arts and *objets d'art*. They also aimed squarely at attracting immigration — wooing skilled artisans from the northern hemisphere's crowded, polluted Industrial Revolution cityscapes to cleaner, bigger southern skies, lands, and a 'new' culture.

Left The Eiffel Tower is the most famous legacy of an exhibition, the one held in Paris in 1900. Whipped up fast and intended as a temporary lure, it has to many become the symbol of the city, of France. View of the Champ de Mars taken from under the Eiffel Tower, 1990, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Goodyear Archival Collection

A 1880 lithograph view of the exhibition at the Garden Palace, City of Sydney Archives

B Garden Palace interior as seen in *The Illustrated Sydney News*, 1882

C Main Palace Garden walk, c.1880, with relocated sculptures and promenaders, photo John Paine, Mitchell Library



The Burning of the Garden Palace, seen from the North Shore, 1882, JC Hoyte, State Library of NSW

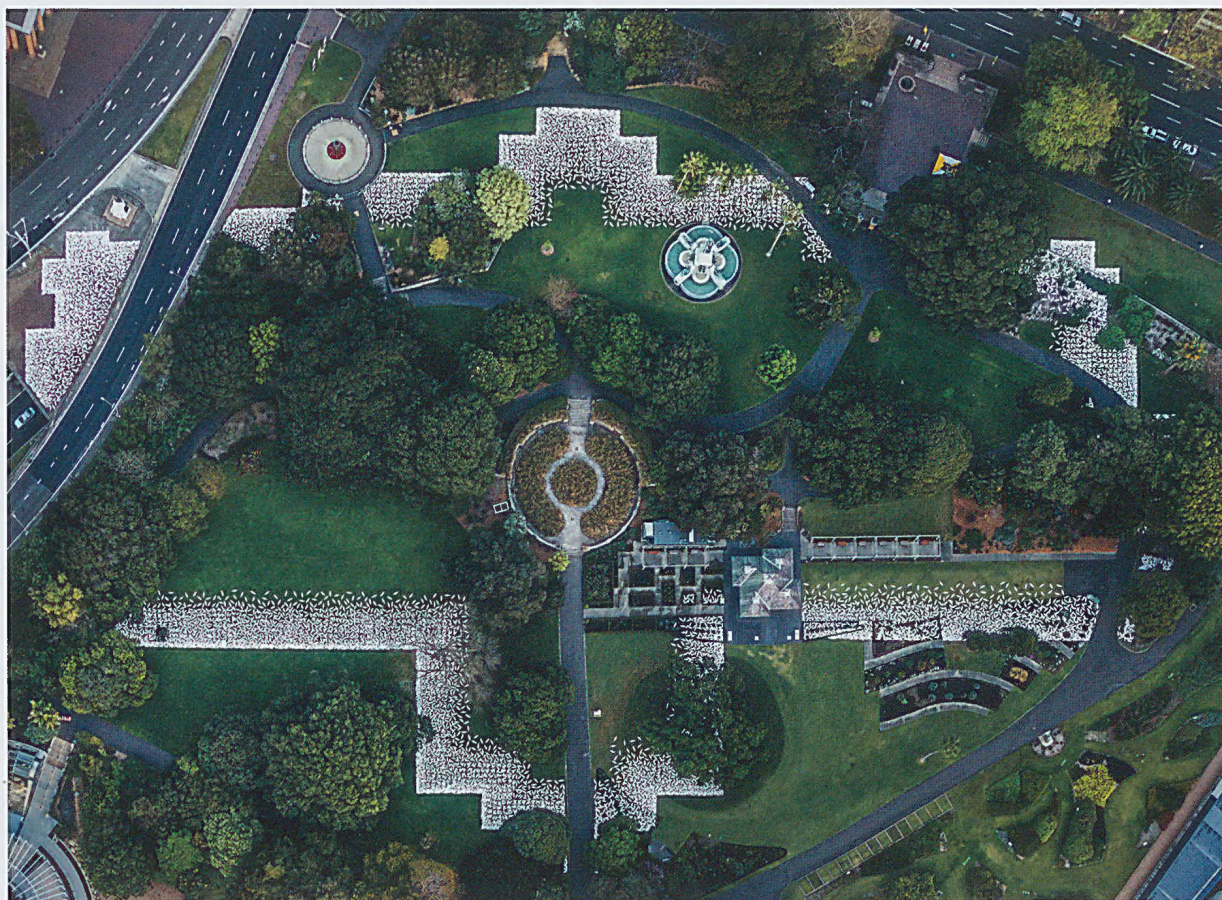
In 1879, Sydney's Domain hosted Australia's first international exhibition. It came after a 156 per cent population increase in the previous 20 years and mid-way through a huge state-wide public works program constructing schools, hospitals, parks, court houses, post offices and railways. The exhibition building showcased the skills of Colonial Architect James Barnet, and building contractor, John Young. Teams of 1500 men laboured day and night to get it built, ready, stocked and open on schedule.

Barnet's steel, timber and glass *Garden Palace* dominated the ridge of the Domain east of the city (between the State Library and what is now the Conservatorium of Music, then Government House Stables). It was designed to be seen from Sydney Harbour's Heads, and to 'look like an Indian fete'. The Palace also highlighted the skills of Charles Moore and his team of gardeners, who, on little budget and tight timeframes, managed to trick up what had been paddocks into grand formal grounds, impressing visitors with innovative ribbon bedding and carpet bedding in High Victorian style. A terrace at the palace's northern end, overlooking the Botanic Gardens, Farm Cove and the harbour, was a favoured stopping, sitting and viewing spot. Not just bedding, but 'tropicalia' was a device

Moore used: large, colourful leaved plants such as tropical *Cordyline* species and cultivars, in pots were plunged in the ground and made a festive pizzazz. Spiky grasses and grass-like plants – pampas grass, New Zealand toi toi, yuccas, agaves – featured boldly.

Moore's displays outside were matched in the Agricultural Hall displays by leading members of the nursery trade, agricultural and horticultural societies. Among the offerings were eucalyptus oil, wax fruit models, new hybrids or cultivars of flowers, pots, plant stands, tools. The Australian states and New Zealand had the largest indoor displays. But also there were India, Ceylon, Austria, Holland, Great Britain, New Caledonia, Italy, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Fiji.

Photographs give an idea of the mammoth scale of the Palace, which dominated the burgeoning city. Sydney's third steam-tram service delivered exhibition goers from Central Station (then called Redfern). This proved so popular, public lobbying saw it retained, with tram sheds built on Bennelong Point, where today's Sydney Opera House stands. Panoramic photos from its rooftop are fascinating. Many are digitised in State and National Library collections (search via Trove).



Aerial view of Jonathan Jones' *barrangal dyara* (skin and bones), Kaldor Public Art Projects, 2016, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, photo Pedro Greig.

Jones created a footprint of the Garden Palace from 15,000 shields, installed eight soundscapes in Sydney language, Gamilaraay, Gumbaynggirr, Gunditjmarra, Ngarrindjeri, Paakantji, Wiradjuri and Woiwurrung and planted a native meadow of kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) in place of the usual roses under what had been the dome of the building. The work celebrated the resilience and survival of the world's oldest living cultures.

Up in smoke – the lot!

In a mysterious blaze on 11 September 1879, the Garden Palace was destroyed. The cause of the fire is not known. One theory had it that Macquarie Street property owners did not like the obstruction to 'their' harbour views. The first census had just been done; its records held inside the building. The flames engulfed many convict ancestor records, land transaction records and archives. Was this deliberate arson to hide less-than-desirable pasts? Sadly also lost were big collections of Aboriginal spears, shields, cultural artefacts, 300 paintings from the young Art Gallery Society, Linnean Society and geological records, and of course multiple trade products.

Into the ashes stepped Charles Moore and team, turning it into 'the Palace Gardens', as it remains. A circular sunken garden and fountain pick out the footprint of the central dome. Line-of-beauty serpentine paths swerve along the sloping, elevated site, giving pleasing vistas. A grand fountain dedicated to Governor Phillip is a feature. Many smaller urns and sculptures imported for the exhibition survived, and were repositioned on pedestals through the gardens or in other parks. Some have since suffered vandalism and have been withdrawn from public gaze. Fortunately, philanthropy and changing attitudes have seen reinstatement and repair of some.

A subsequent director of Sydney Botanic Gardens, Joseph Henry (JH) Maiden, arrived in Australia after the exhibition in 1881 and began work for the new Technological, Industrial and Sanitary Museum (now the Powerhouse Museum of Arts & Sciences), where he recreated a collection incinerated in the blaze. Maiden replaced Charles Moore in 1896 as Director of the Gardens, which he ran until he retired in 1924. A photograph of the Palace Garden (circa 1900) shows Maiden's large collection of *Opuntia* spp. – prickly pears – as 'economic botany' on public display, well before the plant's weed potential was plain. Like Moore, he continued the Garden's role of sending, by train, plants from the State Nursery to public parks, buildings and institutions, state-wide. Another legacy.

An AGHS legacy in the Palace Garden is a tropical mangrove tree, *Barringtonia asiatica*, planted by Peter Watts AM on the 25th anniversary in 2005 of the Society he helped found. Sadly, its label saying so has been removed, a small challenge to have corrected!

Reference

Peter Proudfoot, Roslyn Maguire and Robert Freestone (eds), *Colonial City, Global City: Sydney's International Exhibition, 1878*, Crossing Press, 2000

Stuart Read, co-chair of the AGHS, is a horticulturist, heritage bureaucrat, tour-leader and talk-giver, who loves landscapes and gardens.





Claire Baddeley

The Nurseries of St George

Sydney's flourishing plant trade from the 1850s

Newspaper advertisement for John Iliffe's Rosevale Nursery, *Illustrated Sydney News*, 7 June 1884, p. 16

By the mid-19th century, the Victorian enthusiasm for flowers, plants and gardens was widespread across all levels of society. In Sydney, the nursery and seed trade developed rapidly. Unlike today, many nurseries in greater Sydney grew most of their stock on site on the urban fringes of the city. To the southeast of Sydney, in the bayside area incorporating Botany and Rockdale, along with Hurstville in the St George region, numerous large- and small-scale nurseries were established from the 1850s onwards. Swamps were

converted into gardens, and 'low lying lands...rich in humus, well-watered and easily cultivated', as they were described in a 1954 municipal history of Rockdale, became prominent nurseries.

Five hundred varieties at Rosevale

One of the most successful nurseries in southeastern Sydney during the 19th century was Rosevale Nursery in Rockdale. In 1861 the St George area had a population of 1,619 people, just 18 of whom were listed as being in 'trade and commerce'.

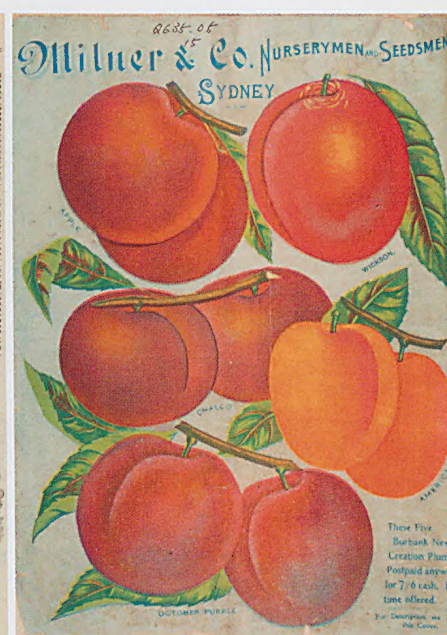
One of these was John Illife (c. 1840–1910), who established Rosevale Nursery in addition to cultivating a 12-ha plantation nursery on land in nearby Bexley. While Rosevale Nursery was devoted to growing and supplying exotic and ornamental plants to colonies across Australia, Beverley Earnshaw notes in *The Land between two Rivers: the St. George District in Federation times* (Kogarah Historical Society Inc, 2001) that visitors also ‘flocked to Illife’s Nursery to stroll along the stone-edged walls and admire the acres of roses, hydrangeas, camellias and azaleas and other species not native to Australia’. In 1884 the *Illustrated Sydney News* declared Rosevale ‘the most extensive nursery and plant establishment in the colony’. It was growing more than 500 varieties of roses, 30,000 fruit trees and thousands of camellia specimens. The nursery featured a dozen plant houses, with sides of bamboo wickerwork, a hot house for tropical plants, and many large trees.

So extensive was Rosevale in the 1880s that the newspaper compared it to the Jardins de Ville in Paris. At the centre of the nursery stood Illife’s family home, *Rosevale Villa*, built in 1873. According to Joan Lawrence (*Pictorial Memories St George: Rockdale, Kogarah, Hurstville*, Kingsclear Books, Crows Nest, 1996) a Chinese gardener, John Ah Lee, undertook much of the planting and potting at the nursery and lived on site. By the 1890s Illife & Co’s Nursery had become Milner and Smith (later Milner & Co). Milner & Co continued to offer a wide variety of plants, with their 65-page catalogue in 1900 advertising plants, bulbs, vegetables, fruit trees and roses.

The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser (Saturday 21 April 1900) reported that the selection of Milner & Co plants included in a display at the Technological Museum consisted of ‘choice palms and ferns, gracing the entrance into a pavilion in which one can see many varieties of summer fruit and citrus trees, evergreen shrubs and roses...[with] some fruit trees from Kingsgrove (Hurstville) and Illawarra (Rockdale) nurseries...’

One of Australia’s largest – Searl & Sons

In addition to Rosevale Nursery in Rockdale, Searl & Sons, who occupied an eight-hectare nursery site near Botany, were synonymous with the nursery and floral trade in Sydney during the 19th century. Frederick Searl senior started out selling plants, flowers and seeds in the old city markets in Sydney during the 1850s. By the 1880s, Searl & Sons were advertising themselves

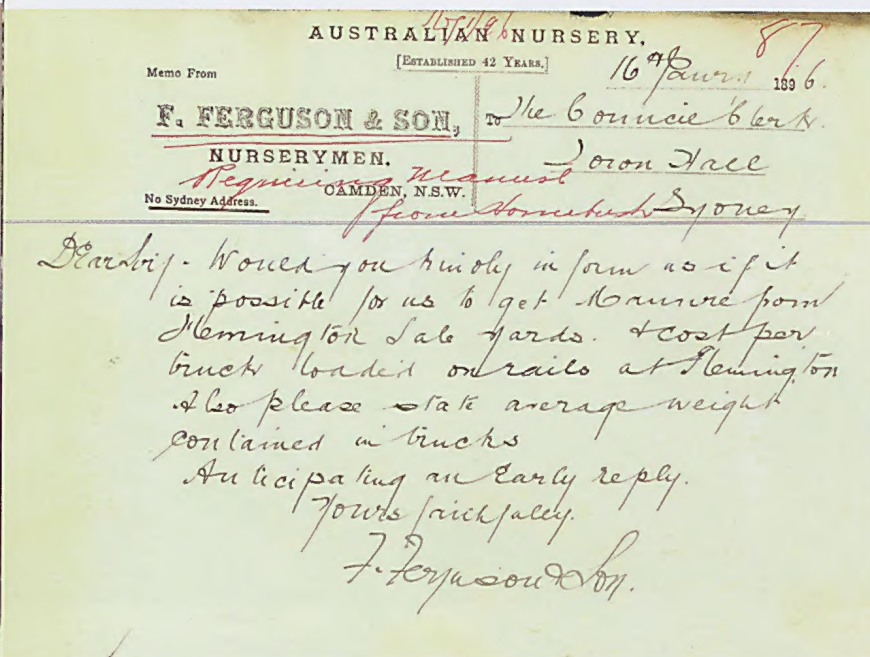


as ‘bouquetists, florists, seedsmen and artists floral decorators’ as well as managing a flower nursery at Petersham and a shop in King Street, Sydney. It was common practice among nurserymen during the late 19th century to open city shops, while the nurseries themselves were often located further afield. As Searl & Sons’ business grew, so too did the number of specialised sites they managed. *Australian Practical Horticulture* (1890) described the establishment of their four-hectare nursery near Botany:

Here are to be seen whole fields of snowflakes, resembling barley, and beds after beds of tube-roses, numbering many thousands of bulbs; also of daffodils, narcissus, and jonquils, among which many recently introduced varieties of merit were noticed...and no less than 12,000 hyacinths, all named varieties, are under cultivation...

Top *Rosevale Villa*, Princes Highway, Rockdale, c. 1905, Bayside City Council Libraries, Local Studies collection
Rosevale Villa was used as a wedding reception venue in the 1950s. It was demolished in 1962.

Below Milner & Co nurseryman and seedsman 1900 catalogue: tomatoes on p.15 and the back cover featuring plum varieties, State Library of New South Wales collection



By 1904 Searl & Sons had nurseries at Ashfield, Botany and Burwood, with a further seed and bulb nursery established at Exeter in the Southern Highlands the following year. A decade later, the company was one of the largest in Australia.

The oldest in the Commonwealth – the Australian Nursery

While the suburbs of Rockdale and Botany were known for their extensive nurseries, the nearby suburb of Hurstville also supported large and small nurseries. F. Ferguson & Son, established during the 1850s as the 'Australian Nursery', had sites in Hurstville and Camden by 1913. These sites needed regular and large supplies of fertiliser. To minimise costs and make use of a readily available resource, Ferguson & Son wrote to the City of Sydney Council seeking to buy manure from the Flemington Sale Yards. Their request was declined because the manure was being disposed of under a three-year contract to a Mr Pitt of Wentworth Falls.

The Australian Nursery was still operating during the 1940s, by which time it was considered the oldest and largest in the Commonwealth.

Rose growing in the southeast

Greenbank Nursery, established by William Minnette in the 1880s, was another successful business. On a site of seven hectares, William and his sons managed a nursery as well as flower stalls at Paddy's and Belmore markets in the city. Many of Sydney's leading flower and palm lovers were Greenbank customers. By 1916 the business specialised in roses, palms, bouvardias, shrubs and hedge plants, and camellias.

Edward's Pine Villa nursery, established by Henry James Edward (1835–1907) in 1864, similarly supplied ornamental trees, shrubs, and roses, along with cut flowers and floral work in Hurstville. Named after the pine trees along the boundary of the property, the nursery existed on a reduced two-hectare allotment until 1939.

Like many of the nurseries mentioned, Pine Villa grew and supplied roses. The late 19th and early 20th centuries could be described as the 'period of the rose' in Australian gardens, such was their popularity. Victor Crittenden (*The Front Garden: The Story of the Cottage Garden in Australia*,



Top City of Sydney Archives, Letters Received [Municipal Council of Sydney] A-00332324

Bottom Rose Catalogue & Guide, C.H. Halstead, Nursery, Hurstville [c.1899], State Library of New South Wales collection

Canberra, 1979) traces the introduction of large shrub roses and tea roses 'as the supreme beauty of the front garden' back to the 1940s.

With a passion for both architecture and roses, Charles Herbert Halstead (1865–1941) established a specialist nursery in Hurstville during the 1880s. His roses were advertised in beautifully printed catalogues, which included traditional roses and new varieties. The *Evening News* reported on Wednesday 3 May 1899 that 'the well-known rose grower, of Hurstville...has now about six acres of land under cultivation for roses alone'. Halstead introduced the pink hybrid tea rose 'Madame Abel Chatenay' into Australia in 1899 and subsequently the white 'Marie Pavié' and yellow 'Friedrich Harms' ('Franz Deegan') roses in 1904, and registered the new variety 'Vanity', which he bred in 1911. While managing the nursery, Halstead served as Mayor of Kogarah from 1893 to 1894. In 1900 he moved a portion of his architecture business to Bowral, recommencing his architectural practice in Hurstville in 1912 and continuing his rose nursery there.

Pressure from urban sprawl

With the growth of Sydney, nurseries faced huge potential markets, but also increased competition from other businesses and for the land they occupied on suburban fringes. Charles Halstead continued to operate his rose nursery until the subdivision of his estate in 1920. Similarly, by 1928 the former site of Rosevale nursery had been subdivided and sold off as Rockdale Illife estate. Searl & Sons had disappeared from their Botany site by the Second World War and by the 1960s Ferguson & Son had moved from Hurstville to larger premises and land in Sylvania.

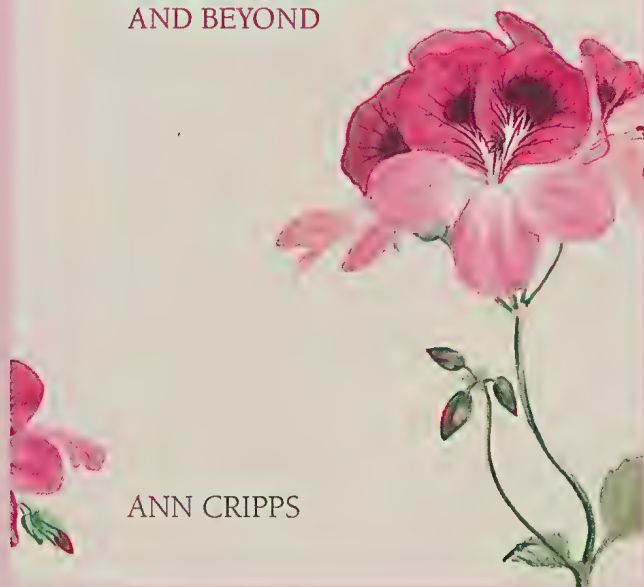
The establishment and operation of nurseries such as these in southeastern Sydney provide insights into early horticultural businesses from the mid-19th century onwards. As pressures for suburban land grew and garden trends changed, their position in the market was overtaken by much larger enterprises such as Yates & Co, who often located their growing nurseries in regional areas. These companies also focused on selling seeds and garden products, including fertilisers, potting mixes and tools, to meet the changing needs of modern gardeners.

Dr Claire Baddeley is Curator and Coordinator, Cultural Services at Hurstville Museum & Gallery. Her interests include garden history, regional gardens, and cultural landscapes.



Gardeners, Plant Collectors, Friends

HOBART TOWN
AND BEYOND



ANN CRIPPS

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Gardeners, Plant Collectors, Friends is the product of 20 years of careful research in Tasmania, Australia and abroad. Ann Cripps – historian, garden lover and AGHS member – has interwoven the stories of more than 25 men and women who contributed to the horticultural history of Van Diemen's Land. Early letters, diaries and rare manuscripts bring them and their landscapes to life.

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Catherine Shields

Patterdale, Tasmania

The making of an artist's garden

John Glover born Houghton-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, Britain 1767, died Patterdale, Tasmania 1849, *A view of the artist's house and garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land* 1835, Deddington, Tasmania, oil on canvas, 76.4 x 114.4 cm

Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1951, Art Gallery of South Australia

How is it possible to recreate a well-known historic garden when no traces of the original exist? This question was posed to me by Carol Westmore of Nile Farm, Deddington, Tasmania, in early 2019. The garden we were discussing was once owned by one of Australia's most proficient and prolific colonial artists: John Glover.

Glover arrived in Tasmania in 1831, aged 64, and soon after moved to a farm at Mills Plains, Deddington in the Tasmanian Midlands. He named his new farm *Patterdale*, after the area of the English Lake District where he had farmed in the early 1800s. Nestled on flat, fertile plains, with gently rolling hills surrounding and distant views to craggy mountains, it is clear why this energetic artist had been drawn to Deddington.

Within three years Glover had immortalised the garden in his painting, *A view of the artist's house and garden, Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land* (1835).

Since Glover's time, *Patterdale* had suffered a long decline. The farmhouse was mostly a ruin and the garden long gone until 2004, when Rodney and Carol Westmore bought the property and embarked on a rescue. The first time I first visited, the farmhouse had undergone a masterful restoration and Carol was now turning her attention to the garden.

Luckily, a bird's eye view of the garden in Glover's time existed, having been painted by his eldest son, John Richardson Glover, in a wonderful, annotated plan view of the house and garden. Carol had used this 'plan' plus Glover's original painting to rebuild his garden studio and lay out a number of rectangular planting beds.

The design issues

Most significantly, the use of the garden was now to be very different from Glover's time. His was a private garden for his family's personal pleasure. This new garden was to be open to the public

A number of the plants in *A view of the artist's house and garden* were probably yellow Scotch broom, white Spanish broom and yellow mullein. These were not possible to use because all are now declared weeds in Tasmania. Others, such as the roses, hollyhocks, liliiums and rosemary were fairly clear but the rest, appearing as dashes of colour, were mere guesses, with most being too vague to be positively identified.

Glover had painted one moment in the lifetime of a garden. Later in the year it would have been different and later in its life, the shrubs would have dominated the perennials. In fact, we have no way of knowing how accurate John's painting is. Was he painting exactly what he was seeing or was he using artistic licence and imagining what he wanted to see?

image
Catherine Shields





A Approximate view from Glover's original painting site at the start of the design, showing the altered conditions, March 2019

B Summer 2020, the garden filling out

C Winter 2021— just before the yearly cut back

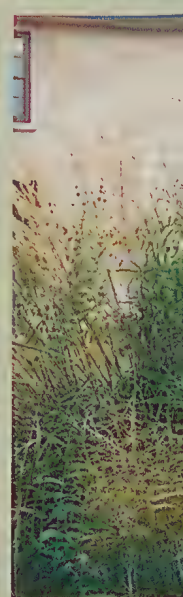
D Looking down from the bedroom window, March 2021

E The immersive quality of the planting

F Looking towards the Glover studio, autumn 2021

G *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty', *Achillea* 'Terracotta', white *Gaura lindheimeri*, *Knautia macedonica*

Photos Catherine Shields





C



E



G



F



The garden in December 2020, photo Prue Slatyer

Given the historical significance of the garden, I took the responsibility of its design very seriously yet, with only a handful of the original plants that might be used, the altered scale, conditions and use, I had to broaden my sources of inspiration.

Solutions

I looked to the wider landscape, observing the beautiful straw colours of the native grasses and to contemporary design in other historic gardens. There is a strong movement in Glover's home country to create new gardens within the grounds of historic and stately homes. Even the usually conservative English Heritage people are embracing this move. Maev Kennedy, heritage correspondent for *The Guardian*, wrote in 1999, 'With gardening becoming the new rock 'n' roll, owners of historic properties have realised that as many of the visitors are coming for the gardens as for the Gainsboroughs'.

After a little soul searching, I decided the best solution was to give Carol a garden that would provide visitors with interest over much of the year; one that would provide this quickly, be

sensitive to the surrounding environment and display a natural beauty, as Glover's original garden did. I wanted to create a living painting.

Returning to the painting, I chose Glover's main colour palette as the dominant theme. Rather than having all these plant colours at the same time, I spread the flowering out through the year to provide the seasonal interest for visitors. I settled on a matrix planting because the garden would be seen, not from a single viewpoint like the painting, but from all angles at all times of the year. This is an immersive garden, to walk through and experience close at hand. The grasses form a strong base and the perennial flowers come and go in a succession of colour through the year. Plants are repeated through the beds, as they were in Glover's painting, and densely planted to help suppress the weeds.

The seasons start with fresh green spring growth, peppered with white and yellow flowers. The colour mix — reds, pinks, yellows and white — peaks in summer and is the most representative of Glover's painting. The density and height of planting reaches its maximum in



autumn when the straw colours of the grasses dominate, harmonising perfectly with the stone house, emulating the verticality of the yellow broom in the painting and connecting the garden to the nearby native environment. This height is matched by yellow flowers of helianthus and rudbeckia and grounded by deep orange-red helenium, picking up on the house windows and door colour. This abundance and height are one of the ways in which the garden can absorb a group of people and still feel intimate. As the year cools and slows, the planting fades to a palette of straws and browns, with the beauty of seed heads left on display. By mid-winter the garden is ready to rest and is cut to the ground before the year starts again.

The garden was planted in June 2019 and opened to the public a few months later. As with all gardens, lessons are being learnt and changes made. The roses needed more air around them and have been relocated to a new dedicated area. Carol has added a small vegetable garden and a beautiful bed of kangaroo grass, which further integrates the garden into its landscape.

Finally to John Glover

During the process of designing, planting and revisiting the garden I visited Glover's grave at the sweet, simply painted brick chapel in Deddington, built around 1840. In a rather one-way conversation, I talked to him about his new garden. I hope he would approve of the way it is today. Perhaps he would even have planted some of the plants we used, were he making his garden in these times. Most of all, I hope that were he to step out of his front door today, the garden's beauty would still move him enough to paint it afresh.

The yellow of the broom in the painting is represented by tall *Helianthus* 'Sheila's Sunshine', *Rudbeckia laciniata* (recently finished flowering) and *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster'

Photo, Catherine Shields, taken in March 2021, after the windows and doors were painted red to match Glover's painting

Trained as a horticulturist and landscape designer not too far from Glover's original Patterdale, UK, **Catherine Shields** BSc (Hons), MLD has been running 'The Alchemy of Gardens' in Tasmania since 2000. She specialises in garden design that conveys a passion for meaning, connection and treading lightly on the land.





Clare Gleeson

Quaker Mason and the weeping pagoda tree plate

Commemorating a great New Zealand gardener

Thomas and Jane
Mason c. 1850,
National Library of
New Zealand

A gardener's spade and a potter's wheel seem unlikely historical bedfellows. Yet, as a plate resting on dresser shelves around New Zealand shows, history is full of interesting twists and turns. The plate was fired by the world-famous English pottery Masons Ironware to celebrate one of the most important figures in New Zealand's horticultural history, Thomas 'Quaker' Mason. Because the potter and the horticulturist shared a common ancestor, the Mason business agreed to manufacture 160 of these special plates to commemorate the Mason family reunion in 1994.

The plate features the Mandalay pattern, one of Mason's oldest, surrounding an image of a weeping pagoda tree (*Sophora japonica* 'Pendula') planted by Thomas Mason around 1845. The tree can still be seen outside 7 Avalon Crescent, Lower Hutt (in the Wellington area), the only specimen in New Zealand and a beautiful remnant of what was said at the time to be the most impressive garden in the southern hemisphere.

Thomas Mason and his wife Jane arrived in Lower Hutt's suburb of Petone in April 1841. They settled on land at Taita, alongside the river. Thomas's first plantings were crop trials of potatoes. Six weeks after his arrival he wrote to his uncle in England asking him to send asparagus,

Siberian crab apple, onion, red cabbage and other vegetable seeds as well as dianthus, rose and hawthorn seeds. Soon after that he asked for more vegetable seeds as well as seeds of oak and ash trees to brighten up the sombre landscape.

In 1846, due to difficulties with local Maori, the Masons moved to Tasmania. Thomas Mason was a Quaker and although obliged to leave the Friends after marrying a non-Quaker, while in Tasmania he was asked to rejoin, and his wife to join, the Society. It was Thomas' religion and resultant behaviour that earned him the sobriquet 'Quaker'.

The Masons returned from Tasmania in 1851, bringing back a variety of apples that formed the basis of an orchard planted soon after their return, supplemented later that year by another 150 assorted fruit trees from Tasmania. In a letter to his uncle, Thomas described how well his apples, apricots, almonds, cherries, peaches, pears, plums, chestnuts, walnuts and currants were growing. He was also growing gooseberries given to him by Alfred Ludlam at nearby Bellevue in the Hutt Valley and grapes from vines imported from Sydney. While in Tasmania, Thomas had procured eucalyptus seeds. On his return he used them to plant a shelter belt around his property, which gave it the name of *The Gums*.

The garden at *The Gums*

From the time of his return from Tasmania in 1851, while earning an income from sheep farming, Quaker Mason began a program of collection and acclimatisation of plants and trees that continued all his life.

In 1871 he wrote:

I have upwards of 100 fine kinds of roses and 60 camellias besides azaleas and rhododendrons, all of which flourish here. Some camellias are upwards of 7 feet and have been in bloom for five months. The garden is my recreation.

The five-hectare garden included hundreds of named rhododendrons, camellias, tree peonies, azaleas, roses, bulbs, maples and hydrangeas. In a report to the Wellington Philosophical Society in 1896, Thomas Mason listed 1,500 species grown at *The Gums*. An additional list of 235 species was published in 1903. Choice specimens from America were included such as the tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), which had reached 14m by 1896 and the cork oak, (*Quercus suber*, 11m in 1896). Native species were also planted, mingled with the exotic. To complement this vast collection the garden contained more than 13km of box hedging, glasshouses, summer houses to sit in and relax, and paths wide enough for Jane Mason, who suffered ill-health, to accompany her husband around in a little dogcart.

Naturally, Thomas had help in such a large garden and in 1871 he wrote to his aunt that his 'principal helper is an old Maori woman who weeds etc.', adding 'she has one great recommendation, that is, she will not destroy any strange plant unless she is specifically instructed to do so'. As the size of the garden increased so did its workforce and by 1900 eight gardeners were permanently employed, increasing to 15 or more in busy times.



Top Mason ironware plate made to commemorate the Mason family reunion in 1994, private collection

Below Mr Walters, gardener at *The Gums* for 30 years, Wairarapa Archive





Summer house,
The Gums, circa 1906,
Hutt Libraries

The garden attracted many famous visitors, including Professor Wilson of Harvard University, who considered the garden's *Magnolia campbellii* to be 'probably the finest in the world'. James Veitch of the famous British nursery visited while in New Zealand as part of a world tour of botanic and significant gardens. He wrote of the huge range of trees and plants at *The Gums* and how successful Thomas had been in cultivating them. The public also visited and fellow gardeners always went away carrying seeds and cuttings.

So productive was the edible garden that it was said the whole of Wellington was supplied with rhubarb, tomatoes and apples from *The Gums*, with drays containing two tons of goods leaving at regular intervals several days a week. Thomas is reputed to have been the first to grow tomatoes in New Zealand, his gardeners not willing to eat them until the birds pecking the fruit convinced them they were safe. He was very generous and gave struggling families fruit and vegetables until they could grow their own. Wagonloads of flowers were sent into the city or Hutt town for any special event.

As well as creating a magnificent private garden, the founding and subsequent development of the Wellington Botanic Garden owes much to Quaker Mason. He gave substantial gifts of plants to the Garden and from 1877 to 1891 was a member of its board; he was chairman of the board in 1891 when the Garden passed to the Wellington City Council. Because of his place in the Garden's history, during the 1994 family reunion permission was given for the Mason family to plant a *Quercus canariensis* x *Q. robur*, an uncommon hybrid oak tree, which had been grown by Thomas's grandson, the rosarian Frank Mason.



The Gums by
John Horsfall,
National Library of
New Zealand



After Quaker Mason died in 1903, the property, which he had transferred to his daughter Elizabeth in 1885 and subsequently leased from her, passed through several hands, and for a while operated as a pleasure garden, known as Mason's Gardens. Despite public outcry, in 1922 the famous garden was subdivided and sold as building lots.

A memento of the garden survives in the naming of Garden Road but sadly, Magnolia Crescent and Rhododendron Avenue, which were named on the subdivision plan for the site, were substituted for the more prosaic Avalon Crescent and Tennyson Avenue.

However, in addition to the weeping pagoda several other trees remain as tantalising reminders of this wonderful garden. If you take a stroll down Avalon Crescent, you can still see two cork oaks (*Quercus suber*) at numbers 2 and 12A, a Sierra redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) at number 6, the famed *Magnolia campbellii* at number 7A and an English oak (*Quercus robur*) at number 22, all once part of the garden. But the loveliest survivor is the weeping pagoda, protected, prized and its image preserved forever on Quaker Mason's weeping pagoda tree plate.

This article was first published in Volume II, Issue 3, 2021 of *The Gardener's Journal*, edited by AGHS member, Margaret Long.

More information about *The Gardener's Journal* can be found on the website for Margaret's garden, Frensham, www.frensham.co.nz.

The Gardener's Journal has several Australian subscribers and some Australian writers.

The gnarled trunk of the weeping pagoda tree planted by Thomas Mason at 7 Avalon Crescent, Lower Hutt, photo Clare Gleeson

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Dr Clare Gleeson is a Wellington-based historian and gardener who works as a research librarian at Radio New Zealand.





Bill Oates

Armidale's *Booloominbah* gardens

A history in photographs

Reproduction of
1924 panorama
of *Booloominbah*
garden from south by
HS McBurney
Raglan Street, Mosman

Armidale on the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales combines the altitude of the Great Dividing Range with its granite or basalt soils and a cooler climate than the plains or the coast. The region was called New England by early European settlers and provided a landscape that readily assimilated northern hemisphere plant species to appease the desire for familiar surroundings in an alien location. *Booloominbah* dominates the northwest edge of the city. The site was added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register in 2006.

The Federation Arts and Crafts style mansion needs little description for New Englanders. It has been extensively documented since the house's completion in 1888 owing to the celebrity of the architect Horbury Hunt and the wealth and community status of its pastoralist owners, Frederick and Sarah White. The national reputation of the building was assured when it became the site of Australia's first regional university in 1938, later to become the University of New England (UNE).

The extensive gardens and European idyll of a rolling deer park were appreciated by generations. They represent a serious attempt to recreate a little vista of England in Australia. While the use of these gardens as a family and community space has been recorded, we have relatively scant knowledge about the early garden design.

The site does feature in many images created by White cousins living nearby at *Saumarez* and in albums and collections of many other people who visited the property over time. The context for these images can be established from reports in two local newspapers, the *Armidale Express* and the *Armidale Chronicle*, now available in Trove.

What the photographs tell us

One photograph, taken as the house was being completed in 1888, shows the complete lack of pre-existing garden design features or plantings. Only a few other photographs document the late 19th-century development of the garden. This might be because Frederick used *Booloominbah* as the family summer residence, while living at *Aston* in Sydney for winter. After his death in 1903, Sarah White relocated to *Booloominbah* permanently. She quickly hired a gardener, Mr Monley, who started in 1904.

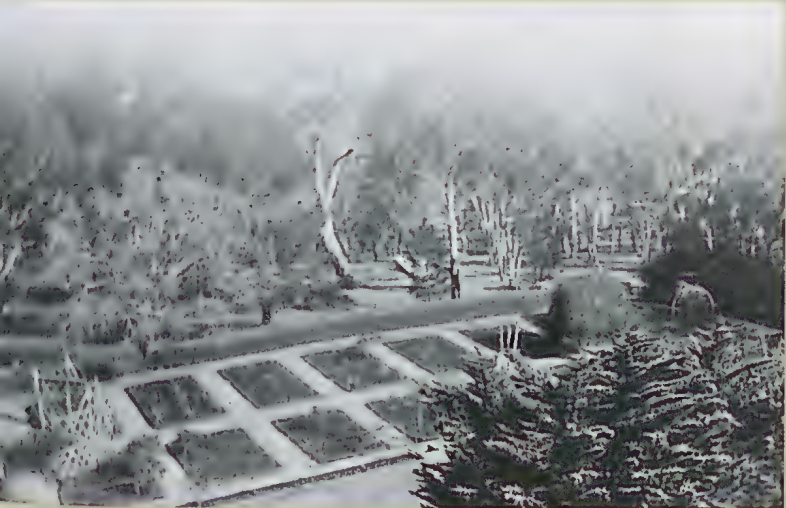
There are no surviving written records from the *Booloominbah* Whites, nor has a family photo album ever been discovered. Some early pictures exist amongst White family descendants including the Harris family album of *Abington* (northwest of Armidale near Bundarra) and in the *Saumarez* White collections, along with some commercial images taken before the First World War. The pictorial record becomes much richer when Sarah White opened *Booloominbah* as a Red Cross Convalescent Hospital in 1916. Both soldiers and nurses took many photographs up to 1919. These photographs depict extensive rose gardens, sweeping lawns, garden structures in both iron and timber, and a deer park complete with an imported herd of deer.



Booloominbah, reproduced from *Dalgety's Monthly Review* April 1904



Booloominbah rose garden, UNE Heritage Centre P1368



Booloominbah gardens circa 1939, UNE Heritage Centre, P02115



Students on the southern lawn circa 1948, showing rose beds to the south and flower beds nearer *Booloominbah*, UNE Heritage Centre Rankin Album VI I86.3 _002.f



New England University College Workers workers 1938, UNE Heritage Centre P2826



A dog house to remember under the wisteria, UNE Heritage Centre P99_4947, Solomons glass plate negative

The first local newspaper reference naming *Booloominbah* was in 1888. This was a court report about a theft from the nearly completed building. A few years later, the property was reported as hosting officers from a Japanese naval vessel visiting Sydney in 1891, although these guests were entertained by a bear shooting expedition on a different local property. The first mention of a garden party at *Booloominbah* was in 1896. Community events continued from this time to the present day. When sailors from the American Great White fleet visited in 1908, the *Booloominbah* gardens were a centrepiece of the festivities.

Fewer photographs exist to record the garden in Mrs White's declining years. Bruce Mitchell refers in a centennial history, *House on the Hill Booloominbah Home and University, 1888–1988* (University of New England, 1988), to Mrs White having three full-time gardeners in the 1920s. They managed the lawns and flower beds around the house, as well as remarkable fruit and vegetable gardens, which benefited from access to plenty of horse and cow manure from the *Booloominbah* stables. The orchard contained massive grape trellises, 45m long, completely wired-in for protection against birds. The gardeners also supervised the management of the deer park.

Following Mrs White's death in 1933, the family could not sustain the household and the house was unoccupied. Some of the land around *Booloominbah* farm was subdivided and sold. A new solution for using the site was proposed by Mrs White's son-in-law, TR Forster of *Abington*, to the White family. Forster bought the property and donated it to the state on the condition a campus for the first regional university would be established by the NSW Government. In 1938 a small band of Sydney University academics and regional students took up residence in the renovated *Booloominbah* house and its outbuildings. Initially, the campus was only part of the original extensive grounds and farmland, with several dairying concerns and apple orchards operating beyond the boundaries of the college.

The Second World War greatly restricted the labour available to maintain the horticultural enterprise around the new university college, which comprised the decorative gardens and extensive vegetable and medicinal drug crops. Amidst protests from the University College warden, Edgar Booth, the campus gardener was conscripted into the Australian Army in 1942. Still, the gardens remained a central part of campus life,

photographed by students and staff. Then came the post-war expansion of the campus and, in 1954, autonomy from Sydney University, during which time the university was acquiring land around the *Booloominbah* farm, with playing fields, building sites for residential colleges and research plots being included on the *Trevenna* property, bequeathed?

The need for a larger venue for graduation ceremonies led to de-commissioning the southern rose gardens in 1965. The campus by this time did, however, include another rose garden at *Trevenna*, bequeathed to the University in 1961. The Mary White College was dedicated in 1957 and its buildings sited in the western end of the Deer Park. The deer herd remained on site from 1888 until 2018 when it was destroyed at the direction of UNE Management. The Deer Park remains *in situ*.

Staff and students alike have memories of the gardens over the decades: from the sturdy stone walled and tile-roof dog house, to the evening tranquillity being interrupted by flatulent deer in the 1950s, to the beauty of wisteria blossom in spring heralding the arrival of examinations season for students, to graduation parties in the autumn.

The AGHS Northern NSW branch project

I am following on from the work of the late Bruce Mitchell and Jillian Oppenheimer, UNE associates and AGHS members, to compile a website of old garden images and other electronic resources. These resources will also contribute to a third-year digital research unit in the Bachelor of Historical Enquiry at UNE. The image collection consists of photographs from the White family album, the Armidale community and UNE alumni. Further additions would be welcomed as we continue to build this archive for the AGHS and to help the UNE Landscape Management Committee and the university's research programs.

References

The photographs referred to in this article can be found in archival repositories such as UNE's Heritage Centre, Anglican Archives Armidale and the Armidale and District Historical Society.

For more about *Trevenna*, see Lynne Walker's article in AGH Vol. 31 No. 4 April 2020

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/product/agh-vol-31-no-4-april-2020/>

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Lavender

A remarkable herb

Dot Evans

This old nursery rhyme, with its 30 verses, can be sung as a tender lullaby or in a much bawdier version as an invitation to a lover. The plant too is versatile. Lavender can be grown as an ornamental plant, harvested for its aromatic oils, used in medicine, hung as an insect repellent, enjoyed for its perfume, employed in cooking and, in recent years, grown on specialised farms as a tourist attraction. Wonderful claims have been made for its properties ranging from its ability to calm mad dogs or to attract a lover. A sprig placed in his right shoe should do the trick.

English lavender,
image geishaboy500,
Creative Commons
(CC BY 2.0)

Lavender's blue, dilly dilly,
Lavender's green
When you are king, dilly dilly,
I shall be queen

Who told you so, dilly dilly,
Who told you so?
'Twas my own heart, dilly dilly,
That told me so

Call up your friends, dilly, dilly
Set them to work
Some to the plough, dilly dilly,
Some to the fork

Some to the hay, dilly dilly,
Some to thresh corn
Whilst you and I, dilly dilly,
Keep ourselves warm.

There are 32 species of the genus *Lavandula*, in the family Lamiaceae¹. *Lavandula* is derived from the Latin *lavare* meaning to wash. Only four or five species are commonly in cultivation but from these as many as 300 hybrids and varieties are available commercially.

Most lavenders are native to the Mediterranean region where they thrive in summer-dry climates and poor soil. All are shrubby plants with spikes of inconspicuous blue or violet flowers, although some have showy bracts that form a tuft or cluster known as a 'coma' on top of the spike.

LAVENDER VARIETIES

L. angustifolia is English lavender with long narrow flowering spikes and entire leaves. This is the cold-hardest of lavenders.

L. dentata is French lavender with long narrow flowering spikes and dentate leaves.

L. dhofarensis is Arabian lavender with deeply divided (ferny) leaves and deep purple spikes.

L. latifolia is spike lavender with broad entire leaves and long flowering spikes. Lavandin is a hybrid between ***L. angustifolia*** and ***L. latifolia***.

L. stoechas or lavender gentle is called both Spanish or Italian lavender. It has solid, blunt flower spikes, often with large showy bracts. Leaves are entire. *L. stoechas* is weedy in parts of temperate Australia, including in Victoria and South Australia.

¹ A monograph, *The Genus Lavandula* by Dr Tim Upson and Susyn Andrews, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, 2004, gives a detailed account of the taxonomy of the genus.

Growing lavender

Lavender loves full sun, although it will tolerate some shade. It likes alkaline conditions in well-drained, sandy soil but not prolonged wet conditions. When mature, it will tolerate drought but a good soak occasionally will keep it looking green. Bushes should be pruned back by about a third after flowering to encourage new growth but do not cut into old wood. Generally fertiliser is not needed; however, annual applications of lime in autumn can help lavenders growing in acidic conditions. Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

L. canariensis is commonly grown in Australian gardens as it is more tolerant of heat and humidity. All lavenders are aromatic but for drying or oil production *L. angustifolia* and *L. latifolia* are the best choices.

Lavender in ancient and medieval times

Lavender was used in many ancient civilisations. Archaeologists have reported that some jars in a pharaoh's tomb still smelled of lavender when they were opened centuries later. The Romans used lavender to purify their communal baths. Their physicians advocated adding it to drinks to help ease chest complaints and those attending the Emperor Nero (AD 37–68) used it to prepare anti-poison pills. Traditional Chinese medicine employs lavender to treat fevers, infection and infertility.

The polymath, Abbess Hildegard (1098–1179) of Bingen in Germany, had many medical remedies that included lavender. She believed that if a person with a lice infestation smelled lavender frequently, the lice would die. As an added bonus, the aroma would terrify malign spirits. Hildegard also recommended boiling spike lavender with wine or honey and water and, when cool, to drink it as a decongestant. To ensure a good night's sleep she advised a bath with lavender after a long walk, advice still proffered today.

In medieval times fresh lavender was used as a strewing herb in houses and churches to mask unpleasant odours and repel insects. William Turner (1508–68), a physician and botanist, stated that a lavender wash was effective against diseases of the head. He was one of the first to distinguish between spike lavender (*L. latifolia*) and lavender gentle (*L. stoechas*), which he had growing in his garden in Germany but had not seen in England.

The English herbalist, John Gerard (1545–1612), described several different forms of lavender and noted that a small form with purple flowers



grew very well in the king's gardens in London. He advocated inhaling steam from boiling lavender or bathing the forehead to treat catalepsy, migraine, fainting and epilepsy. A powder of dried lavender, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg, he believed, would help with passions of the heart, giddiness, palsy and swimming of the brain. But he cautioned against taking it with strong wine. Shakespeare (1564–1616) mentioned lavender only once, possibly because it was not a common garden plant in his time. John Parkinson, Herbal Apothecary to King James I (1603–25), recognised that lavender made a good scent and treatment for colds. He used lavender seed to eliminate worms and for pains of the head and brain.

Nicholas Culpeper (1616–54) endorsed Gerard's treatments and added another: an abortifacient able to expel a dead foetus or an afterbirth. He also used it as a gargle to treat toothache, wind and colic. Some of his remedies involved not only lavender and spices, but also ingredients like fresh orange tree leaves, hawthorn berries, ambergris, musk, saffron and even a dash of pearl or emerald. This would have made his decoctions extremely difficult to make and very expensive. He also recommended oil of lavender inhaled or rubbed on the skin for many ailments, making him a pioneer aromatherapist.

Commercial production

Lavender featured in herbals throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, when it was grown mainly in herb and knot gardens. It was not until the 19th century that it became a commercial crop. Lavender in Victorian times was brought to the cities where it was sold by street vendors.



Sachets of dried lavender flowers were tucked into linen cupboards or placed under pillows and fresh lavender was sold for tisanes. The Victorians believed lavender was also an aphrodisiac.

The essential oils are found mainly in the calyx of the flower. These have been extracted in much the same way for millennia. Harvested flower spikes are packed into a still pot and steam is ducted in. The oil glands rupture releasing the oil, which vaporises. The oil and water vapour enters a condenser, which cools it to a liquid. This is collected, allowed to stand and the oil is drawn off. The raw oil is a complex mixture of chemicals that depends not only on the species but also on the season, the maturity of the plant and even the distilling process. The two most prominent constituents, about 90-per cent, are linalyl acetate and linalool, which have been shown to have sedative, local anaesthetic, antifungal and insecticidal effects.

Lavender oil is widely used in the perfume industry. Soap, shampoo, talcum powder and cosmetics all benefit from the scent of lavender. The food industry has adopted lavender as flavourings in ice cream, biscuits and cakes, infused into mustards, honey or jams or added to grilled meat. Home cookery generally calls for the incorporation of lavender flowers as the oil is too strong.

Lavender in Australia

Although lavender has been grown in Australian gardens since colonial days, it was only in the early 20th century that lavender farms were established. More recently these have become tourist attractions. Every one of our drier states

has a lavender farm – Queensland and the Northern Territory are too humid to provide good growing conditions. The largest farm is Bridestowe Lavender Estate in Tasmania, first planted in 1922 and now covering 105 hectares. Most contemporary farms include a café, a shop selling lavender products, lavender decorated items and lavender stuffed souvenirs. They usually offer guided tours and some augment the lavender fields with farm animals, peacocks or emus. Others have extensive pleasure gardens and all are set in beautiful surroundings. English lavender flowering is at its best in December and January, which means that visitor numbers are huge at these times, right at the time the flowers need to be cut. Still, the harvest itself can be part of the visitor experience.

A truly multifunctional plant

What other plant can you grow for a colourful display, dry for a long-lasting perfume, inhale for its calming properties, massage into your skin for relaxation, bathe in its fragrance, put in your undies drawer to refresh them, incorporate into your cooking, infuse into your cosmetics and finally spend a day admiring its beauty on a farm and singing about it?

Dot Evans started her working life in the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. In Australia, she worked as an interpretive officer in visitor centres in Victoria, Northern Territory and Tasmania. She has been a member of the AGHS for more than 20 years. Now retired, she loves gardening, music and travelling.



Left Lavender can be added to many foods, sweet or savoury

Right Lavender-stuffed teddy bears were developed by Bridestowe Lavender Estate in Tasmania and are hugely popular with tourists

photos Dot Evans

For the bookshelf

Carolyn Landon, *Of Friends & Gardens, A history of the Cranbourne Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria*

Hardie Grant, 2022, 272 pp., \$50

This book starts with a fulsome note of acknowledgment, mentioning first Rodger and Gwen Elliot, who are prominent among the stalwarts of the remarkable Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. This foreword will resonate with members of the Australian Garden History Society, as it conveys both the effort and pleasure membership of a volunteer organisation can bring.

The history, which commemorates 30 years of the Friends, starts much earlier. It explains the role a gift from Maud Gibson to the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne in 1945 had in making the dream of an Australian native garden a reality.

Landon, a Friend herself, goes back further, revealing 'a powerful lineage of serious promoters, protectors and collectors of Australian flora from [Ferdinand von] Mueller' who, she observes, also knew how to harness the energies of volunteers.

Gibson's nephew, the Hon Peter Howson, and Dame Elisabeth Murdoch were instrumental in the acquisition of the site. The story of the lobbying to save ancient untouched

land from more sand mining, urban sprawl and a highway is instructive for those interested in advocacy. It took patience, an understanding of the bureaucracy, polite letters and more strident commentary to win the fight.

A protégée of Dame Elisabeth, Judy Baillieu, who visited the site when it was just bush, initiated the Friends group in the early 1980s. The book documents the group's activities – meeting in a refurbished caravan, conducting working bees, socialising – starting out with barbecues and a trip to the Grampians – but evolving into lunches with speakers and overseas travel. Fundraising began

with an auction at an annual dinner. One year each of David Attenborough's size 14, autographed gumboots, 'went for a hefty sum'. By 2018 takings from plant sales alone were \$72,000, with other revenue coming from work of special interest groups, especially the Botanical Illustrators Group, lectures and tours.

The media release announcing the publication refers to it as a coffee table book. The images, including the cover photograph by Tim Entwisle, as well as many taken, I presume, by members of the Friends in Focus, are beautiful and the book's design classy. For those who won't go immediately to the index to see themselves or other friends mentioned, flipping through the pages will give a sense of the evolution of Cranbourne gardens.

There is, however, more to the book.

It documents the ups and downs of a volunteer organisation, which has had to grapple with stagnant membership, the strict requirements of grants, changing regulations and so on and on. What shines through in this group is a strong camaraderie built on the shared love of, sometimes obsession for, the Australian bush, its flora and fauna, and pride in being part of creating a living museum of some of the oldest plants on earth.

Francesca Beddie is editor of *Australian Garden History*. She has experience of those ups and downs, having been executive director of Adult Learning Australia, and on management committees of the Professional Historians Association.

David J Mabberley and David T Moore, with the assistance of Jacek Wajer, *The Robert Brown Handbook, a guide to the life and work of Robert Brown (1773-1858)*, Scottish botanist Koeltz Botanical Books, Germany, 2022, 624 pp.

The abstract for the handbook by Mabberley *et al.* begins, 'In the middle of the nineteenth century, Robert Brown (1773–1858) was considered a scientific titan and dubbed "Jupiter Botanicus", the greatest botanist of his time... Yet today... he and his ground-breaking work are little appreciated'. This book goes a long way to correcting that situation.

Robert Brown is also a very important figure in the beginnings of Australian botany and therefore Australian garden history. Let me illustrate with an anecdote about *Xanthorrhoea*, which sparked my interest in Brown in the 1970s, when I began to study botany.

OF FRIENDS & GARDENS

A History of the Cranbourne Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

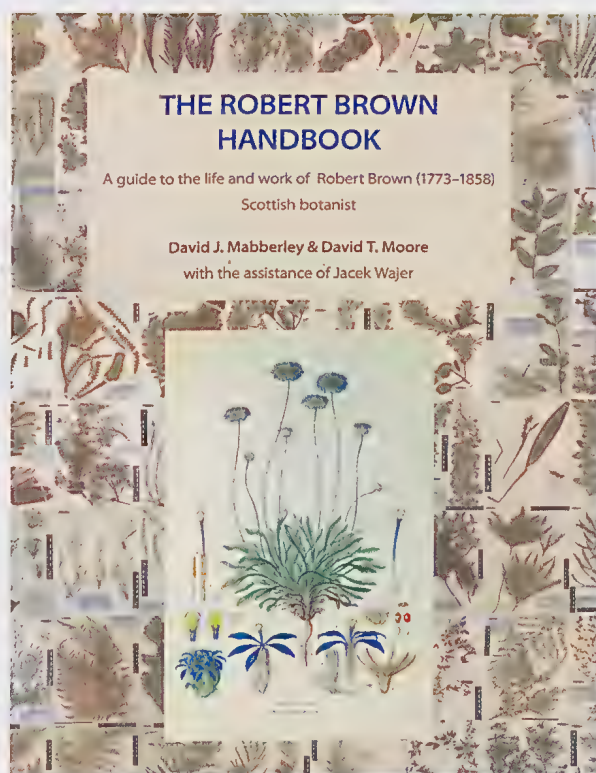
Carolyn Landon

Robert Brown described six species of *Xanthorrhoea* (included on pages 179 and 180 of the handbook). One of his descriptions, based on his own collection made while circumnavigating Australia with Matthew Flinders in his small open boat, the *Investigator*, was a very small xanthorrhoea he found growing in exposed conditions on the east coast of Curtis Island, near Gladstone. He called it *Xanthorrhoea pumilio* (Latin for dwarf). When I started work on the taxonomy of *Xanthorrhoea*, a number of botanists, including Alma T Lee, the then-expert on the species of *Xanthorrhoea* found in NSW, told me they did not believe that *Xanthorrhoea pumilio* was a valid species but most likely a depauperate example of another species. This became an issue I had to deal with when revising the taxonomy of the genus for the *Flora of Australia* and led to my retracing Robert Brown's footsteps. I corresponded with the late Professor Tom Vallance, who was working on a transcript of Brown's diary (published in 2001). Professor Vallance kindly provided me with the section of Brown's diary covering his visit to Curtis Island. When my technical assistant and I went to Curtis Island, we were driven almost to the site of Brown's collection in a rusted-out old car that had been converted into a beach buggy. It was a wild but rewarding ride because we found a population of more than 100 plants of *X. pumilio* growing exactly as Brown had described. This and the flowering/fruiting material we collected led me to support Brown's decision that it is a distinct species.

The handbook is divided into four sections. In section 1, the introduction includes a brief biography of Brown, a detailed list of the plants named in his honour (eponymy), his publications and lists Brown's botanical manuscripts held in the Natural History Museum, London.

Section 2 is a catalogue of taxonomic names coined by Brown with explanatory notes and discussion of the specimens that Brown used as the example (taxonomic type -- typification) of his names. The last sections cover Brown's nomenclatural novelties and the references used.

This is absolute gem for taxonomists and nomenclaturists. It sets a very high standard for scholarship and its detail will be invaluable for botanists and other taxonomic specialists for many years to come. It's most likely to



be the final technical word on Robert Brown. The language is aimed at taxonomic nomenclaturist botanists and the price tag (€173.83) puts it beyond most gardeners. My one real criticism of the book is the lack of an index. As the taxonomic order is different to that of the *Flora of Australia*, for example, *Xanthorrhoea* is placed in the Asphodelaceae and placed after the Iridaceae. It is not the alphabetical order favoured by many gardeners, so without an index the handbook is difficult to navigate.

The Robert Brown Handbook should, perhaps must, be on the shelves of major libraries, and certainly of every biological library, for specialists and other dedicated and technically-minded gardeners to consult.

Reviewing it for *Australian Garden History* did leave me wondering if David Mabblerley could be persuaded to provide an everyman's version of his handbook along with Professor Vallance's transcript of Brown's journal. I'd love to see that.

Dr David Bedford worked as a botanist at the National Herbarium of NSW before becoming Director of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, a post that he held for six years before relocating to Queensland to manage a family business. He is a member of AGHS Queensland.

Gardens and landscapes of the Southern Highlands then and now

Searl's Exeter Gardens.

In 2015 Bud Townsing took this photograph of the original photograph (taken circa 1910). The original belongs to Peg South, the granddaughter of Exeter photographer Martin Moore.

It is attributed to Martin Moore because of the hand colouring style.



The cool climate of the Southern Highlands of NSW on Gundungarra country has inspired successive generations of garden lovers to create the splendid gardens and landscapes that give the region such a distinctive character. A joint exhibition by the Berrima District Historical and Family History Society (BDHS) and the Australian Garden History Society–Southern Highlands Branch (AGHS–SHB) serves to remind us of the importance of landscape and garden heritage and the need for its protection.

Most of the area is in the Wingecarribee Shire, whose large areas of national parks and water catchments provide a high level of conservation. There is concern, however, for the area's man-made rural landscapes and urban gardens.

Being on the edge of Greater Sydney and adjacent to the fast-growing Wollondilly Shire, whose population is expected to grow by 78 per cent over the next 20 years, poses challenges. Even within the Wingecarribee Shire, the most recent population projection from *.id (informed decisions)* is for a 24 per cent increase from 52,309 in June 2021 to 65,000 by 2041. How can such growth be accommodated at the same time as maintaining the cultural landscapes and garden heritage of the Southern Highlands?

While rural landscapes have some protection through the use of environmental zoning, they do need a more focused form of management. This can be provided by Landscape Conservation Area listing and appropriate development controls.

A 2017 study by Colleen Morris recommended such controls in the case of the National Trust-recognised Sutton Forest and Exeter Landscape and the proposed extensions to the existing Berrima Landscape Conservation Area. This would recognise the historic significance of the cultural landscape of Berrima, Sutton Forest and Exeter as a place of early exploration beyond the limits of the Cumberland Plain in 1798, and of early settlement and pastoralism from 1819.

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=EXH-811%2120190402T020022.037%20GMT>

Threats to gardens include the demolition of houses and gardens for medium density seniors housing in low-density residential areas including heritage conservation areas. In addition, NSW State policies allow aged-care, childcare and health facilities, as well as boarding houses, in all residential areas, including heritage conservation areas. The approved demolition in 2018 of two houses for a large hospice and medical centre in the Bowral Conservation Area is a clear example of the current failure to protect heritage values in these areas.

In 2021 the Heritage Committee of Wingecarribee Shire Council undertook a major review and recommended the heritage listing of an additional 464 items in the shire and 13 new or extended conservation areas, the implementation of the Colleen Morris Study and action to address inappropriate development in conservation areas. Council has yet to implement this review.

Another AGHS member, Chris Betteridge, a specialist in the conservation of cultural landscapes, was commissioned by AGHS–SHB to undertake a landscape character study of Bowral public spaces, which was completed in November 2021. The study highlights the special character of Bowral, the largest town in the Southern Highlands, and makes recommendations for the conservation of its cultural landscape character. The study serves as a template for studies of other towns seeking to preserve their unique identity.

Raising community awareness

The exhibition in Berrima features more than 20 old and new local gardens, depicted on digital screen displays as well as in glass-cabinet and wall-mounted exhibits. These convey stories about early prominent lovers of the district's landscape, photograph collections of local horticultural events including Bowral's Tulip Time and Bundanoon's Garden Ramble, and local gardens featured in *Highlife* magazine. The ensemble shows visitors what has been preserved and changed and introduces them to the region's settler history.

Early British explorers first came to the Southern Highlands in 1798 but it was not until 1819 that official sanction was given to Dr Charles Throsby and a small group of settlers to take up



land at Bong Bong and Sutton Forest. Others soon followed. In 1821 James Atkinson settled on his grant, *Oldbury*, where he built a beautiful sandstone farmhouse in 1828. His daughter Louisa Atkinson was taught by her mother Charlotte to observe nature. Louisa went on to paint the plants, trees and animals she knew so well.

In 1882 the NSW Government purchased a property at Sutton Forest for use as a country residence by the Governor of New South Wales. *Hillview* became an escape from the summer heat of Sydney for successive Governors from 1885 until 1957. Wealthy Sydneysiders too were attracted to the cooler climate and the social cachet of establishing a country seat near the vice-regal residence. The 1880s saw the building of many impressive houses in the district and the beginnings

Top *Oldbury Farm*, 2021, photo Bud Townsing

Bottom *Oldbury Farm* (somewhere between 1855 and 1872), a sketch from a Louisa Atkinson sketchbook held by the State Library of NSW



A



B



C



D

A Retford Park, photo Joy Brown

B Retford Park, possibly in 1910, Berrima District Historical and Family History Society

C Mark Morton Lookout, Bundanoon, 2014, photo Graham Morgan

D Mark Morton Lookout, circa 1880 to 1890, photo William Augustus Nicholas from an original album of 23 photographs purchased by Bud Townsing purchased on ebay in January 2021. The State Library of NSW has the same photograph in an album of WA Nicholas photographs called the Mitchell Album.

E Milton Park 2021, photo Bud Townsing

F Milton Park circa 1920, Keva North Collection



E



F

The exhibition was made possible by generous loans of exhibits and contributions of stories, materials and photographs from BDHS members, *Highlife* magazine, AGHS-SHB members, the Bundanoon Photography Group, the Maureen Townsing Collection, the Keva North Collection, and the Fitzroy Falls Visitors Centre. For details see <https://www.berrimadistricthistoricalsociety.org.au/museum/current-exhibitions/>

of the garden culture that has become such a feature of Southern Highlands life.

In the late 1800s commercial nurseries and gardens were established at Exeter by horticultural entrepreneurs Arthur Yates and Searl & Sons, who supplied flowers and seeds to the Sydney market and throughout Australia. Innovative photographers like the Bundanoon husband and wife team, William and Sarah Nicholas, were capturing the people, places and landscapes of the area, first on glass plate then on film. These images attracted growing numbers of leisure seekers.

Garden displays and competitions began in the 1950s with the Festival of Flowers, the Dahlia Festival and Tulip Time, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2021. The pictures in the exhibition give a sense of the changing fashions in flower species and their presentation.

The exhibition traces the evolution of the Southern Highlands' garden history and we hope will sharpen visitors' appreciation of the very special character of this place, one that deserves to be cultivated in ways that preserve and celebrate its heritage.

Bud Townsing, a member of the AGHS—SHB committee as well as a member of the Berrima District Historical and Family History Society, led the creation of this exhibition. Ruth Bailey is Chair of the Southern Highlands Branch of the AGHS.

Profile

HELEN OATES, Chair AGHS NNSW Branch and NMC member



Seventeen years ago, a sub-branch of the Sydney branch of AGHS was formed in Northern NSW. A group of dedicated members undertook advocacy, excursions to historic gardens and pastoral runs, oral history recordings and many social occasions – all the enjoyable aspects in which a full branch would engage but without the seemingly more onerous tasks of audit and reporting.

My husband, Bill, and I have been actively involved in the sub-branch since its inception. I am often in awe of how the varying skills, experiences and interests of our members result in wonderful events, and how much we enjoy each other's company. Our group continues to thrive, with our member base blossoming across the Northern Tablelands, within Armidale and Guyra in particular.

In 2013 we ran a very successful national conference, a testament to the hard work, diligence and expertise our members. This provided the seed funding to begin in earnest the installation of our Heritage Rose Garden at *Saumarez Homestead*, made possible through the extraordinarily generous donation of heritage roses by Miss Catherine MacLean, an Armidale resident and long-time rosarian. The memorandum of understanding between AGHS NNSW with the National Trust of NSW has provided the basis for our ongoing partnership. The Heritage Rose Garden remains a significant but pleasurable undertaking, with monthly working bees and an active management committee. It is one of my personal pleasures to be working in the rose garden and to suddenly take in the perfume of the roses wafting around me.

At the end of 2021, with amendments to the AGHS Constitution, our sub-branch became a fully-fledged branch. We are more than ready to undertake the challenges and rewards this brings. As Chair of the new branch, I am aware we need to get to know the issues and historical and cultural gems of the areas we now encompass. A road trip around northern NSW is not too far away! Having worked across vast areas of western and northern NSW as a work health and safety professional for TAFE NSW, my ties to many towns remain strong. Since retiring in 2021, I have the time and opportunity to be more fully involved in promoting and expanding the reach of AGHS.

I am aware that the Society, as is the case with many volunteer organisations, has an aging membership. I believe our response to this inevitability should be multi-pronged. From the perspective of continuing to maintain the Heritage Rose Garden at *Saumarez Homestead*, we have to become better fundraisers, so we can purchase labour for heavy tasks rather than trying to undertake these ourselves. We must also encourage and nurture interest and enthusiasm for gardening and history in younger generations. In Armidale, we have established a positive relationship with **BackTrack**, a ground-breaking program supporting at-risk youth to achieve their dreams. In this part of NSW, agricultural groups and training organisations such as TAFE and community colleges must also be included in our reach for members. This will entail keeping our social media presence current and relevant. While this may sound daunting, we have shown many times that we are able to respond to challenges, growing our own skills and knowledge along the way.

Heritage Rose Garden at *Saumarez Homestead*, photo Helen Oates

Inside view



Warm greetings to all members from a chilly Sydney and Coonabarabran – your Co-Chairs get around! Pleasingly, the new Australian government has re-created the Environment (Climate Change and Heritage) Department under Tanya Plibersek as minister. This augurs well for federal leadership and perhaps more positive prospects for historic gardens, parks, landscapes.

The AGHS's working group on climate change is nearly ready to introduce you to our draft Climate Change and Adaptation Statement. We'll launch it at the conference in Hobart in November. It's only a start – we will be calling on you as members for input. We all do and all can play a role in helping our beloved gardens, old or young, to be resilient, be more ready for a warming, drying future, for more frequent extreme weather events, less water. Gardeners are by nature adaptive, observers, problem-solvers.

We were thrilled at your quick response to booking our conference – it seems we're keen to get together, now COVID is getting more manageable and less worrying. While the full conference is sold out, don't forget there are virtual attendance and 'lectures-only' options. Our first virtual conference in 2021 was a great success. We hope more people will explore this option.

We'd especially like to pay tribute to the Society's Editorial Advisory Committee, who work quietly behind the scenes to ensure the terrific journal we know you love. Among other things, they suggest ideas for stories and assist to maintain a consistent, high editorial standard. Lynne Paul from Tasmania has ably chaired the EAC for some time and is standing down, handing the baton to Anne Claoue-Long – our big thanks to you both and the other EAC members. This issue of the journal also reveals the tireless work of other AGHS members, who not only write about garden history but build the archive for others to explore.

Lisa Nutting has been working with members of the NMC to bolster existing partnerships with like-minded organisations and to build new ones. Thanks also to NMC members Lynne Walker and Annabel Murray, who have been instrumental in consolidating our relationships with ASA Travel and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA). These augur well for future alliances and will expand our reach and, we hope our friends' understanding of what is 'garden history'. AGHS has long taken a broad view of that – something less-well understood in the wider community.

Stuart Read and Bronwyn Blake, Co-Chairs



Is the pen mightier than the trowel in garden history?

WINTER ZOOM WEBINAR

SUNDAY 10 JULY 2022 from 5 to 6.30pm

(and thereafter available for download on the AGHS website)

SPEAKERS Clive Blazey, The Diggers Club and Foundation; Julian Raxworthy, University of Canberra; and Jennifer Stackhouse, gardening writer and editor

TICKET PRICE \$10 AGHS members, \$15 non-members, \$5 students

The money raised from this webinar will be directed to the Nina Crone Writing Fund, which aims to support new and emerging writers in the field of Australian garden history.

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The views expressed in this journal are those of the contributors and are not necessarily shared by the Australian Garden History Society.

Getting to know them

stories from the AGHS national oral history collection

Botanist **Kingsley Dixon PhD** spoke to Patsy Vizents in 2022 about the Wyemando Native Plant Nursery established by granddaughters of Charles Harper (1842–1912), agriculturist, legislator, newspaper proprietor and founder of Guildford Grammar, Perth. The nursery was located on the Great Eastern Highway between the preparatory school and the main school.

My first contact with Wyemando was in the summer holidays of 1965/1966. I was then a 12-year-old...I walked in, cold turkey, unannounced...Nan Harper came out...she just said 'Yes'. I just said I was hoping there might be something I could do around the Nursery...We sort of hit it off and then Sue came to the door to see what was happening. I spent the day with them with potting mixes and all sorts of other things and I kept seeing all these wonderful native plants everywhere, things that I'd only known from the bush, which you never saw in local nurseries. I wasn't a precocious child, I was very shy but when it came to plants all bets were off because I just loved plants and clearly, they loved native plants. So, we just bonded immediately and [we] stayed life-long friends until they both died.

Those early days were extremely formative for me because I then started to learn propagation, soil mixes, native plant diversity and I could talk to people about native plants and I started to get exposed to Latin names, which I found totally overwhelming, mystifying and it frightened me. I somehow thought this was a secret language that I would never understand... My grandparents and my parents loved the bush. We were always in the bush, always on picnics and they always used common names. That will be the sheoaks, kangaroo paws, blue bonnets it was always the common names, never ever the Latin names...

The sisters had an extraordinary diversity of things, both western and some eastern states species...They had *Brachychiton acerifolium*, probably the biggest I've ever seen, growing



photo Sue Monger 2021

[The Harper sisters] put on displays in early Kings Park Wildflower Festivals, it used to be called the Wildflower Display [and was] in a big hessian square tent, with lots of wild picked flowers...I managed to find in Kings Park, in the skip bin, the Wyemando Nursery sign that they would have used and forgot to pick up. That's an important memento...in fact I think other than the catalogue, the only material item remaining from that nursery period.

in the back garden; a gigantic plant. The plant I fell in love with was *Allocasuarina torulosa*, the beautiful weeping eastern sheoak, which used to go the most hauntingly magenta colours.

Can I ask you when they started the Nursery?

Late '50s, early '60s. There were the three sisters: Sue, Nancy, Cecily. [For] Nan and Sue it was their life.

Did they have an interest in the Wild Flower Society before the nursery started?

I don't know, we didn't talk a lot about that because there were other things we were talking about. [H]aving both been trained nurses and seeing the disadvantaged Indigenous children, they started to develop interests, in addition to their native plant interests, in Aboriginal child health. So, I started listening to them, because for me as a young kid, I didn't know anything about Aboriginal people...I became, I think, the youngest card-holding member of what was called the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship – NEAF, which they set up and they ran from their house...I didn't talk about it at home, no one was really that interested, it certainly wasn't something that you spoke about at school, so this was something that influenced me in my early life and has stayed with me ever since.

Extraordinary and impressive women and when you remember that they both lost their fiancés in World War Two, and, I suspect as a result, never married. People ask did they ever speak much about the old days? I think the old days for people like that, were times you didn't want to remember. They lost brothers and fiancés in two world wars, history wasn't a very pleasant place to be.

The full interview is part of AGHS's national oral history collection and is accessible as a transcript and recording at: <https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/kingsley-dixon-2/>



The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.